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(34) Article carrier

(37) An article carrier has a flexible wall 5 extending round the article 2 in its rest position with a slit portion

which extends from a position in which a portion of the article is visible to one in which the portion of the article is protected when the carrier is lifted by handles 4.

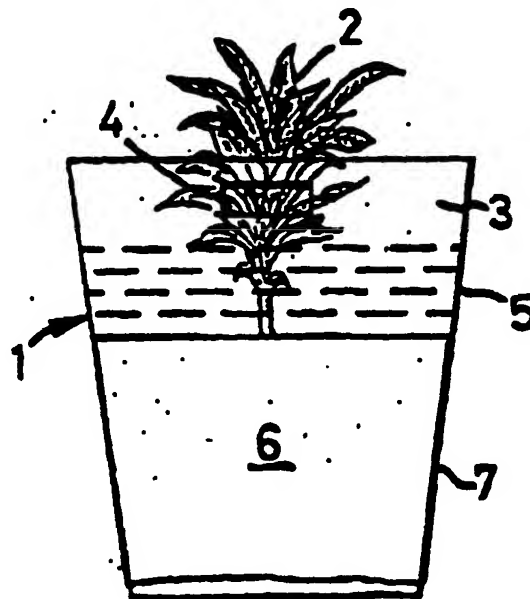


FIG.1

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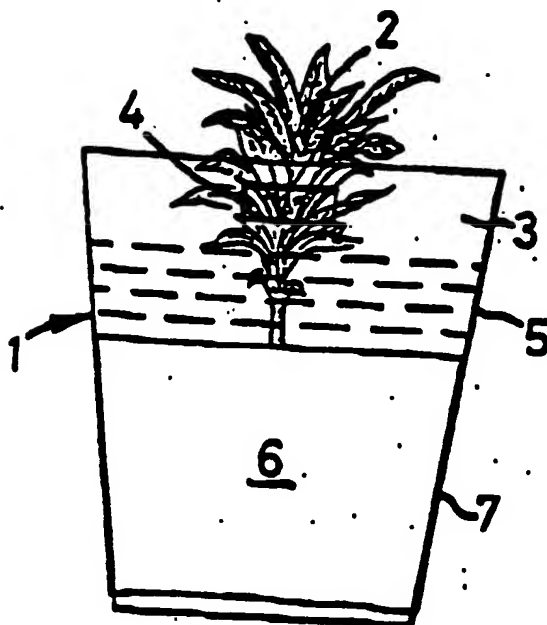


FIG. 1

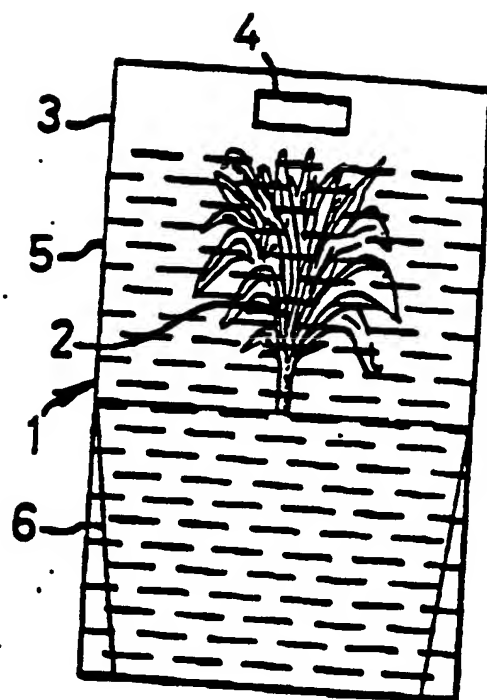


FIG. 2

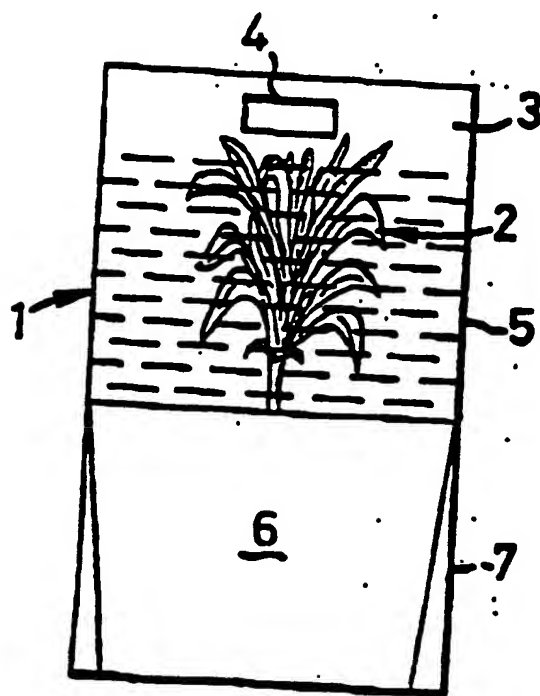


FIG. 3

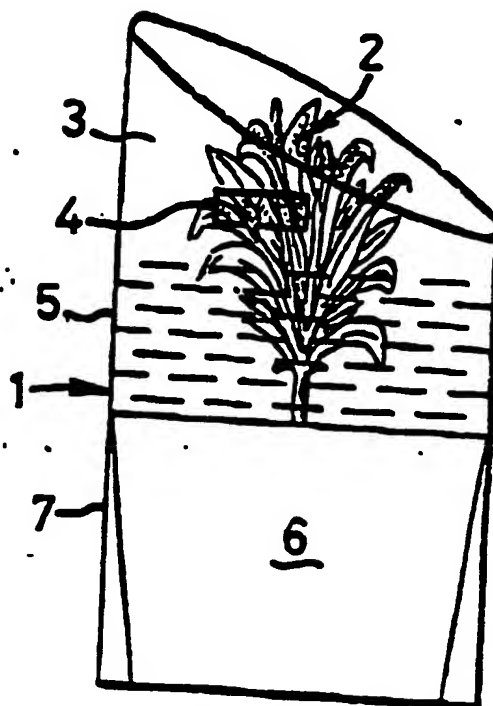


FIG. 4

SPECIFICATION

Package comprising an article and a carrier therefor

The present invention relates to a package comprising an article and a carrier therefor.

GB 1 223 027 discloses a blank which is deformable to form a receptacle. The receptacle however is only formed when an article is placed in the centre of the blank and the blank is lifted by the handles provided. Such an arrangement is not suitable for storing articles in a packaged state, because until the blank is lifted the 'package' would consist only of an article resting on a mat of material provided with slits.

We are not concerned with such flat blanks, which are not suitable for use when an article has to be stored in packaged form before sale.

GB 1 301 259 discloses a container in which to grow plants. The container consists of a tube of flexible plastics material with annular stiffening around its upper periphery. The container may be fully collapsed for storage when empty, in which case the plastics material will form a plurality of folds or pleats or it may be stretched taut so as to fully extend it. There is no disclosure of a package containing an article which package extends when carried to protect the article. There is only a disclosure of a collapsed container from which the contents are to be removed or of a fully extended container. The folds or corrugations produced when the flexible plastics tube is collapsed cause the collapsed container to take up additional space which is undesirable.

We have found a method of packaging an article with a carrier such that, when the article is carried, a portion of the article, which may be particularly delicate is protected by the carrier but this portion is easily visible for example for display purposes, when the article is not being carried.

According to the present invention a package comprises an article and a carrier therefor, the carrier having a flexible wall extending around the article in the rest position and having an open mouth at its upper end, and lifting means for gripping the mouth, the flexible wall having a slit portion extending around its circumference so arranged that on lifting the carrier by the lifting means the flexible wall extends under the weight of the article from an unextended position in which a portion of the article is visible through and/or over the flexible wall to a position in which the said portion of the article is protected by the flexible wall.

The reference to the rest position of the carrier is a reference to its position when not subjected to a lifting force so as to cause the flexible wall to extend. The requirement for a wall to extend round the article in the rest position serves to distinguish the package of the present invention from that of GB 1 223 027 where in the rest position the article would not have a wall extending round it but would rest on a flat mat.

The present invention is particularly useful in packaging potted plants for transport and sale.

The pot in which the plant is grown is usually fairly robust. However, the plant in the pot is more delicate and requires protection, particularly when carried away by hand by a retail purchaser. The present invention provides a package in which the plant is protected by the carrier when it is carried. However, when it is not being carried the plant is visible over and/or through the carrier.

A portion of the article, e.g. in the case of a potted plant, a portion of the plant itself, may project through the mouth of the carrier, or at least above one point on the edge of the mouth of the carrier. In the carrier's unextended state to ensure the required visibility. In the latter case the mouth of the carrier may lie in a plane which is inclined to the plane in which the base of the carrier lies. Additionally or alternatively, the flexible side wall, or a part thereof, of the carrier may be formed from transparent plastics film so that a portion of the article can be seen through the flexible wall.

The article is preferably held in the carrier with at least a part of the wall of the carrier circumferentially contacting the article. For example, the article may be held in the carrier by a portion of the carrier of form corresponding to the lower part of the article. Thus in the case of a potted plant the carrier at least in part may be in a shape corresponding to the pot containing the plant. Where the pot has the usual frusto-conical shape, the pot may be held in the carrier by a corresponding frusto-conical part of the carrier. In such a case it is not necessary for the carrier to have a base extending under the bottom of the article e.g. the pot.

The portion of the carrier in contact with the lower portion of the article may be constituted by a slit flexible film extended by the presence of the article in the carrier.

The arrangement of slits necessary to provide for the extension of the carrier on lifting will be well known to those skilled in the art. Thus the slits are substantially preferably parallel and substantially horizontal. Preferably the slits are so placed that there is a minimum contraction transverse to the direction of elongation when the package is fully extended. This condition is satisfied when the overlap between adjacent rows of slits is reduced to the minimum consistent with obtaining the required extension. Where the lower part of the article is held in an extended slit portion of the carrier, the slits are preferably substantially vertical.

As stated above the carrier may have a frusto-conical form to cooperate with a corresponding frusto-conical part of the article. It will be appreciated that when slits are provided in such a frusto-conical part of the carrier which are substantially parallel to the axis of the carrier they will not be absolutely vertical. However the person skilled in the art will readily appreciate that such slits are substantially vertical for the purposes of this specification.

The lifting means may for example, comprise an unslit portion of film at the mouth of the carrier having apertures cut in it through which the carrier

can be gripped.

The invention will now be described with reference to the drawings in which

Figure 1 is a side view of one embodiment of the invention,

Figure 2 is a side view of an alternative embodiment of the invention,

Figure 3 is a side view of yet another embodiment of the invention while

Figure 4 is a sketch of yet another embodiment of the invention.

The package shown in Figure 1 shows a potted plant in a frusto-conical carrier 1, which extends completely around the circumference of the potted plant. The carrier consists of flexible plastics film for example polyethylene. The carrier has an open mouth of circular plan through which the plant 2 projects. Surrounding the mouth is an unslit portion of film 3 having two apertures 4 on opposed sides of the mouth.

A portion of the flexible side wall 5 provided with horizontal slits extends completely around the circumference of the carrier above the top of the pot 6. The carrier extends to the bottom edge of the frusto-conical pot 6 but does not extend under the base. This portion 7 of the carrier is not provided with slits. The carrier is shown in its unextended state and a substantial portion of the plant 2 is visible above the top of the carrier. When it is desired to transport the package it may be gripped by apertures 4 in the unslit portion of film 3 surround the mouth of the carrier.

Figure 2 shows an embodiment in which the carrier 1 is a bag containing the article which again consists of a pot 6 containing a pot plant. In this case the bag is straight sided and extends underneath the pot 6. The bag is provided with slit portion 5 extending over the full length of the bag except for the unslit portion 3 carrying two apertures 4 (one only shown) arranged on opposed sides of the bag and by which the bag can be lifted. The plant 2 does not extend through the mouth of the carrier. The carrier is however formed from transparent plastic film and the plant is visible through the side wall of the carrier.

The embodiment shown in Figure 3 is similar to the other embodiments except that the lower portion of the carrier extends under the pot to form a bag but is not provided with slits. The bag has a gusseted base. The carrier is formed from transparent plastics film. The reference numerals on the drawing have the same significance as in the other drawings.

The embodiment shown in Figure 4 is similar to that shown in Figure 3 except that the plane of the mouth of the carrier is inclined to the base to improve the visibility of the plant, while restricting the slit portion 5 to the portion of the side wall above the top of the pot 6 and below the mouth of the carrier. The reference numerals in Figure 4 have the same significance as in Figures 1 to 3.

It will be appreciated that in some instances the

carriers may be such that a pot for the plant can be dispensed with, since the planting medium can be, in some cases, adequately retained by the carrier. The carriers shown in Figures 3 and 4 examples of such carriers.

CLAIMS

1. A package comprising an article and a carrier therefor, the carrier having a flexible wall extending around the article in the rest position and having an open mouth at its upper end, and lifting means for gripping the mouth, the flexible wall having a slit portion extending around its circumference so arranged that on lifting the carrier by the lifting means the flexible wall extends under the weight of the article from an unextended position in which a portion of the article is visible through and/or over the flexible wall to a position in which the said portion of the article is protected by the flexible wall.

2. A package comprising an article and a carrier therefor, the carrier having a flexible wall extending around the article in the rest position and having an open mouth at its upper end, and lifting means for gripping the mouth, the flexible wall having a slit portion extending around its circumference so arranged that on lifting the carrier by the lifting means the flexible wall extends under the weight of the article from an unextended position in which a portion of the article projects above at least one point on the edge of the mouth of the carrier and is visible over the flexible wall to a position in which the said portion of the article is protected by the flexible wall.

3. A package according to Claim 2 wherein the mouth of the carrier in its unextended position is in a plane which is inclined to the plane in which the base of the carrier lies.

4. A package according to any one of Claims 1 to 3 wherein a portion of the article projects through the mouth of the carrier when the flexible wall is in the unextended position.

5. A package according to any one of Claims 1 to 4 wherein the article is a potted plant.

6. A package according to any one of the preceding claims wherein the article is held in the carrier by a portion of the carrier of form corresponding to a lower part of the article.

7. A package according to any one of the preceding claims wherein the article has a frusto-conical portion and is held in the carrier by engagement with a corresponding frusto-conical portion of the carrier.

8. A package according to Claim 7 wherein the carrier has no base.

9. A package according to any one of the preceding claims wherein a portion of the carrier in contact with the lower portion of the article consists of slit flexible film extended by the article.

10. A package according to any one of the

preceding claims wherein the slits in the slit portion of the carrier which extends on lifting are substantially horizontal.

11. A package according to Claim 9 wherein the slits in the lower portion of the carrier are substantially vertical.

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